

# Mellieħa Sanctuary

Issued: 6th October 1999

Designer: Joseph Mizzi

Unwatermarked Paper



# Christmas 1999

Issued: 27th November 1999

Designer: Harry Borg

Unwatermarked Paper



Painting by Amadeo Brogli, Loreto Sanctuary, Italy

## *Mellieha Sanctuary*

On 6<sup>th</sup> October 1999 Maltapost plc issued a Miniature Sheet together with a stamp to commemorate the Mellieha Sanctuary.

**The Miniature Sheet** depicts the venerable image of Our lady holding the Child Jesus which is popularly known as the *Madonna tal-Mellieha*. Painted directly on the rock it is believed to be the oldest image of this theme to be found in the Maltese Islands. The image which is popularly believed to be the work of Saint Luke has been damaged even before 1722, especially at the lower part. Actually the painting belongs more to the Siculo-Byzantine period and so it was painted between 1090 and the late 13<sup>th</sup> century

**The stamp** with a value of 35c, is a reproduction of an ex-voto showing the Knight of Saint John Fra Wolfgang Philip Guttenberg invoking the Virgin Mary for protection of the Maltese galley squadron. This ex-voto was presented to the Mellieha Sanctuary by the same knight as a fulfilment of a vow he made in 1678. The painting could be the work of either Stefano Erardi or Giuseppe d'Arena. The painting shows the Knight Guttenberg kneeling in front of an apparition of Our Lady together with her Son. Behind the praying Knight there is a marine view with five galleys with a background of some part of southern Italy. There is also the coat of arms of the Guttenberg family at the lower part of the painting.

## *Christmas 1999*

Only one of the four stamps that make up the last Christmas Set of Stamps of the Millennium depicts a religious motif, the 6c stamp. This value was used for local mail and contrary to the other four stamps carries no additional surcharge. This year's set was issued by Maltapost plc on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1999.

**The 6c stamp:** The figure depicted is that of a close up of the Virgin and Child. The design is more in a Christmas card style than anything artistic.

The set of stamps was designed by Harry Borg and printed in Germany by Bundesdruckerei GmbH. The printing process used was Offset and no watermark was applied.

## *Christmas 2000*

Maltapost plc issued its first Christmas Set of stamps for the New Millennium on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2000, with the sub-title of Christmas in Malta. The 6c value features The Holy Family together with a Maltese Boy and Girl . The artist captured the happy season especially for children on this stamp. The Holy family was designed in 'Pasturi' style, showing the crib which is found during Christmas time in almost all Maltese and Gozitan homes. For the first time since 1969, no surcharge has been added to the real postal value of the stamps.

The set was designed by Gorg Mallia and printed in Germany on unwatermarked paper by Bundesdruckerei GmbH. The printing process used was Offset.

## *Christmas 2002*

The artist who depicted this unusual Christmas set of stamps confessed that her idea for this year's Christmas Set of stamps was to show the Christmas Pageant being transported from one part of the island to another, using our familiar and recognisable modes of transport. Using the cartoon style design she managed do just so.

The 7c value shows the Holy Family being transported on a Maltese cart drawn by a donkey.

The 16c stamp shows the holy Family with other crib personalities on a typical Maltese bus.

On the 22c stamp the Holy Family used the Luzzu for this purpose. Probably they wanted a more private crossing, even if they are depicted by flying angels.

The 37c stamp shows the Holy Family being transported in a Maltese Cab, Karozzin, while a couple of shepherds watch closeby.

Crossing the Gozo Channel can be done by Gozo Channel ferries nowadays, but it could even be done in other ways. On the 75c stamp all the Christmas characters are painted travelling together on the Gozo Boat "Dgħajsa tal-Latini".

The set was designed by Debbie Caruana Dingli and printed on unwatermarked paper by Bundesdruckerei of Germany.

*Anthony Grech*

### *References*

*The Malta Stamp*, Official Buletin of the Philatelic Bureau.

# Christmas 2000

Issued: 18th November 2000

Designer: Gorg Mallia

Unwatermarked Paper



# Christmas 2002

Issued: 20th November 2002

Designer: Debbie Caruana Dingli

Unwatermarked Paper



Painting by Amadeo Brogii, Loreto Sanctuary, Italy